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The Venezuela Boundary Award.

The Anglo-Venezuelan arbitration commission announced its decision on the third of last month. The commission had been in session at Paris nearly four months. In addition to the printed argument of each country, the cases for Venezuela and Great Britain were also presented orally in a most able and exhaustive way by counsel, Ex-President Harrison being chief attorney for Venezuela and Sir Richard Webster for Great Britain. No case ever submitted to arbitration has been more thoroughly and fairly examined than this. It will therefore go down in history as one of the most signal instances of the value and practicability of arbitration in serious disputes. The only shadow upon it is that it was undertaken in the first place by Great Britain only under the threat of compulsion. The outcome of the case ought to satisfy

any nation that it can always safely trust a controversy to impartial arbitration, however sure it may be that its contention is well-grounded.

One cannot help contrasting the spirit in which the announcement of this award is received with that which was manifested when President Cleveland's message on the subject was published in December, 1895. Then the populace, because of the possibility of war, went wild with excitement and the newspapers flamed and snapped for days, until a better spirit arose and finally controlled the situation. How much real interest in the arbitration of the controversy demanded by Mr. Cleveland was at the bottom of the flurry? The answer to this question is found in the lack of attention to the results or even to the proceedings of the Paris tribunal. As soon as all prospect of war had disappeared, public interest in the matter died away. If, instead of the announcement of the award just made, we had had the news of a triumph in war over Great Britain, the nation would have gone intoxicated with the enthusiasm of self-glorification for days and weeks. If interest in right and justice toward Venezuela and toward other lands were what it ought to be, were what with infinite gush it professes to be, we should have had a great national outburst of enthusiasm over the decision of the Paris tribunal—a really great event in the progress of civilization.

The decision of the tribunal is considered a compromise. It was made unanimously, the British and the American members voting together. Though appearing to bear the marks of compromise, the judgment rendered is probably much nearer the right than if it had sustained entirely the contention of either party. Cases have gone to arbitration in which the right was wholly on one side, but it was clearly not so in this case. It has been objected to arbitration that its outcome is so often a compromise. But this, instead of being an argument against it, is one of the strongest in its support. In nearly all international controversies of importance right lies more or less on each side. It is the duty of tribunals, as it is their general practice, to decide how far this is the case and allow each party its dues. If the Anglo-Venezuelan tribunal had given the case wholly to Great Britain or to Venezuela, under the evidences exam-

ined, arbitration would have lost immeasurably in public confidence.

An examination of the text of the decision, which we give on another page, shows that Venezuela is given Point Barima with a strip of land about fifty miles long, thus securing to her entire control of the Orinoco river. The Orinoco, however, and the other rivers along which the boundary is drawn, are to be kept open to the merchant shipping of all nations. The valley of the Essequibo river and the whole coast up to the mouth of the Orinoco are awarded to Great Britain. This is a vast region rich in forests and probably in gold. But Great Britain loses all the territory, or practically so, claimed by her west of the original line drawn by Sir Robert Schomburgk in 1840. The boundary line drawn by the commission follows the original Schomburgk line almost entirely,—a line which had been vigorously rejected by both parties to the dispute.

The line of the boundary now fixed is about 175 miles east of England's extreme claim and 145 miles west of the extreme claim of Venezuela. Of the whole territory in dispute, about 200,000 square miles, each of the disputants gets a large area, the amount going to England being considerably in excess of that going to Venezuela. Venezuela, in addition to securing the entire control of the Orinoco, gets the extensive gold fields in the interior, which constituted one of the chief matters of contention.

When the president of the commission, Professor de Martens of the University of St. Petersburg, read the decision, he expressed satisfaction that the commission had been able to reach a unanimous decision, and that the former good understanding between the two governments was now to be restored. He expressed thanks to his colleagues, to the respective counsel, and especially to the French government for its generous hospitality to the tribunal. Remarks were then made by Mr. Harrison and Sir Richard Webster, the latter declaring that Great Britain and Venezuela would now work side by side in harmony. Afterwards, replying to an inquiry, he said he was satisfied with the result. Mr. Harrison, replying to a similar inquiry, said that "It might have been worse."

The award becomes binding when it is officially communicated to the two governments. Thus ends a dispute which has run on in one way or another for three-quarters of a century, which has broken up diplomatic relations, and at one time threatened war. How simple, inexpensive and honorable the settlement became the moment the nations were willing to drop sentiment, passion and unintelligent wrangling, and carry the controversy to an impartial tribunal capable of grasping and sifting all the facts! The decision, which both nations will without doubt loyally accept, commends itself to the world's sense of fairness. It gives neither party ground for exultation over the other or for feeling humiliated because

of entire defeat. It is a great triumph of reason and good sense, and must do much to strengthen public sentiment in favor of resort to arbitration even in the most difficult and delicate controversies.

The Basis of Civilization.

In his brilliant address on International Relations and Responsibilities before the International Congressional Council at Boston, on the 22d of September, Dr. Lyman Abbott took some most extraordinary grounds in support of his thesis that war is sometimes an advisable and righteous instrument for the promotion of human good. The position taken in this part of his address was essentially that which for many months he has been advocating in the *Outlook* and in addresses at various places. This position is not the old one that defensive war is justifiable. One hears little of that nowadays. It is rather that a certain kind of aggressive war is a Christian duty,—namely, to break down oppression, to promote liberty, to establish law and order, and, as Dr. Abbott now asserts, to lay the foundations of civilization and to prepare the way for successful mission work in the unevangelized portions of the globe.

It is difficult for an unsophisticated mind to see the difference in principle between this position and that taken in support of the "holy wars" of former times. The difference in aims, if there is any, does not change the principle in the least. The parties making the aggression always set themselves up as judges of the righteousness of the ends to be attained, and declare that their standard of goodness and their methods of order are the ones by which others must be forced to govern themselves. If history teaches any lesson with absolute clearness it is that *aggressive* physical force employed by one people against another to promote "holy ends" is dangerous in the extreme, and always leads in some measure to the treading down of liberty and to violations of justice and right, and in the end defeats in its measure the very purposes which it set out to attain.

It is curiously interesting to note that it is the necessity which Dr. Abbott has felt of finding some substantial ground for his defence of the armed subjugation of the Philippine inhabitants, contested as it has been by very many of the best Christians and truest patriots of the country, which has led him on step by step to this extreme position. The extreme dangerousness of the proceeding which Dr. Abbott recommends has been most forcibly illustrated by the recent Spanish War and its resultant, the war in the Philippines. The government went to war to free the Cuban people from oppression. No sooner had it accomplished this purpose, so far as it has been accomplished, than it proceeded, in spite of its solemn declaration against "forcible annexation" as "criminal aggression," to *force* Spain at the point of the